

Comparative Perspectives of *Tafsir Nurul Bajan* and *Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun* on Sundanese Mysticism: Reading Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2: 102

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Article Info

Article History:

Received: 21 January 2026

Revised: 10 February 2026

Accepted: 16 March 2026

Published: 30 March 2026

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Keywords

Abstract

This research is motivated by the persistent influence of mysticism in the religious life of the Sundanese community, including beliefs in amulets, magic, and syncretic spiritual practices. It aims to analyze the perspectives of two local Qur'anic exegeses (tafsir), namely "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" and "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*", on these mystical practices through their interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 102. Employing a qualitative approach with library research and descriptive-interpretive analysis of the tafsir texts, the study reveals distinct interpretive approaches. "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" represents a normative-dogmatic style, strictly prohibiting magic and occult sciences as deviations from core faith. In contrast, "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" offers a cultural-contextual approach, using Sundanese culture as a medium for da'wah while upholding the principle of monotheism. These differing approaches illustrate the dynamics of local tafsir in responding to mystical practices. The study concludes that vernacular exegesis serves not only as a tool for understanding the Qur'an but also as a vital instrument for negotiating between normative Islamic teachings and local cultural realities. It recommends further exploration of how such local interpretations can bridge the gap between orthodox doctrine and living traditions to foster a more contextual and harmonious Islamic practice.

Sundanese Mysticism; *Tafsir Nurul Bajan*; *Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*; Q.S Al-Baqarah

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh masih menguatnya praktik mistisisme dalam kehidupan keagamaan masyarakat Sunda, seperti kepercayaan terhadap *jimat*, *sibir*, *rajab*, kekuatan benda tertentu, ritual klenik, serta praktik spiritual yang mencampurkan ajaran Islam dengan kepercayaan pra-Islam. Fenomena tersebut lahir dari kuatnya tradisi lokal dan sistem kepercayaan turun-temurun yang memengaruhi cara masyarakat memahami ajaran Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pandangan "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" dan "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" terhadap praktik mistis masyarakat Sunda berdasarkan penafsiran Q.S. Al-Baqarah ayat 102. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan serta analisis deskriptif-interpretatif terhadap teks tafsir. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" merepresentasikan corak penafsiran *normatif-dogmatis* yang menegaskan pelarangan praktik sihir dan ilmu gaib sebagai bentuk penyimpangan akidah. Sementara itu, "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" menghadirkan pendekatan *kultural-kontekstual* dengan menempatkan budaya Sunda sebagai medium dakwah, tanpa mengesampingkan prinsip tauhid sebagai landasan utama. Perbedaan pendekatan ini memperlihatkan dinamika tafsir lokal dalam merespons praktik mistis di tengah masyarakat. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tafsir berbahasa daerah tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai media pemahaman Al-Qur'an, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen negosiasi antara ajaran normatif Islam dan realitas budaya lokal. Secara praktis, temuan penelitian ini dapat menjadi rujukan dalam pengembangan strategi dakwah dan pendidikan agama Islam yang lebih kontekstual dan berbasis kearifan lokal Sunda, sehingga pesan tauhid dapat disampaikan secara efektif tanpa mengabaikan realitas budaya masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Mistisisme Masyarakat Sunda; *Tafsir Nurul Bajan*; *Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*; Q.S Al-Baqarah.

INTRODUCTION

Some Sundanese communities, as one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia, possess a system of religiosity and culture forged through a long and complex historical journey. Their religious practices are not solely influenced by Islamic teachings but are also deeply shaped by various local belief systems that thrived long before the arrival of Islam. This syncretic dynamic is clearly reflected in numerous rituals and traditions associated with mysticism, such as the *Seren Taun* harvest ceremony (Priangani et al., 2022), the use of amulets (*jimat*) (Saefullah, 2023) and magical inscriptions (*rajab*) (Firmansyah et al., 2022), practices of magic (*sibir*) (Dharma et al., 2024), rituals to ward off misfortune (*tolak bala*), earth purification (*ruwatan bumi*) (Saputra et al., n.d.), and a prevailing belief in supernatural forces believed to influence human life (Alfan et al., 2024a). These practices are understood by the community as integral to maintaining spiritual and social harmony within their societal framework (Yanti et al., 2024). This mystical inclination cannot be divorced from the influence of Sufism and a spiritually-infused Islam that developed locally. It is more accurately perceived as a cultural expression of religiosity rather than a mere deviation from normative Islamic doctrine. This meaning-making emerged through the internalization of Islamic values, which entered into a dialogical interaction with local traditions, resulting in an adaptive and contextual form of religious practice. Consequently, Sundanese mystical practices exist within a dialectical space between the principle of monotheism (*tauhid*) and hereditary local wisdom.

In this context, Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*) holds a strategic position as a primary reference in shaping religious attitudes toward the various mystical practices prevalent in society. Following the fall of the Sunda Kingdom in 1579 due to the expansion of the Banten and Cirebon Sultanates, Islam's influence on Sundanese culture intensified. This process, described by Johns as vernacularization, facilitated the absorption of Arabic vocabulary into the Sundanese language, which was subsequently accepted as an integral part of the local linguistic richness (Sutiana et al., 2022). The adaptation of Sundanese cultural values into various aspects of Muslim social life underscores the significant role of local wisdom in constructing an "Islamicate" Sundanese identity. This is evident, for instance, in the architecture of mosques and the development of distinctive Sundanese religious traditions, including the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an into the Sundanese language, a practice that emerged well before the 18th century (Rohmana, 2013). The proliferation of published Sundanese translations and interpretations of the Qur'an reflects the community's enthusiasm for receiving and internalizing Islamic teachings. For them, the process of "*Sundanese-izing*" the Qur'an serves as a vital means to deepen spiritual experience, allowing Islamic values to permeate (*nyerep*) and become internalized in daily life (Geertz, 1973).

This study focuses on two seminal works: "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" and "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*". These texts were selected because they represent two influential Sundanese exegetical works that have significantly shaped the religious understanding of the community. "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*", authored by Moh. Romli, is known for its normative-dogmatic approach in explaining Qur'anic verses, particularly those pertaining to faith (*aqidah*) and religious practice, thereby establishing the principle of monotheism as the primary benchmark for evaluating local traditions. Conversely, "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*", by Moh. E. Hasim, presents a more cultural-contextual interpretation, emphasizing the symbolic and contextual meaning of Qur'anic verses in accordance with the social realities of Sundanese society. These differing interpretive characteristics have direct implications for how each tafsir views the mystical practices of the Sundanese people. However,

academic studies that specifically compare the views of these two prominent Sundanese commentaries on this issue remain relatively limited. Therefore, this research aims to conduct a comparative analysis of their perspectives on Sundanese mystical practices, revealing how the Qur'anic text is interpreted within the framework of local culture. This study is expected to contribute to the development of Qur'anic exegesis studies rooted in local wisdom and to enrich the discourse on the relationship between Islam and mystical practices in contemporary Sundanese society.

No comparisons have yet been made of the hermeneutical strategies of two Sundanese interpreters. A relevant undergraduate thesis by Lestari (2019), titled "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" (Penafsiran Moh. E. Hasim Tentang Syirik), examines Moh. E. Hasim's interpretation of polytheism (*syirik*) solely within "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*". While this thesis shares a common ground with the present study in its use of "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" and its tangential connection to mystical practices through the theme of *syirik*, it does not incorporate a comparative element with "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*". Furthermore, existing academic inquiries into Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 102 have predominantly focused on the legal aspects of magic or theological debates within classical and modern tafsir literature. Concurrently, research on Sundanese mysticism has largely been conducted within the disciplinary frameworks of anthropology and cultural studies. Although numerous Qur'anic verses touch upon themes related to mystical practices, this research specifically centers on Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102 for two primary reasons: first, it is the most explicit verse addressing the issue of magic, a core component of Sundanese mystical traditions; and second, due to the scope of "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*", which only extends to the third *juḡ* (volume), a comprehensive analysis of all verses related to mysticism is unfeasible. Consequently, there is a noticeable scarcity of research that specifically examines local Sundanese Qur'anic commentaries as a medium for the dialectic between the Qur'anic text and actual mystical practices. This study endeavors to fill this lacuna by offering a novel, comparative analysis of how "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" and "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" interpret Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 102, thereby illuminating the dynamic negotiation between normative Islamic teachings and the lived reality of Sundanese cultural mysticism.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. The unit of analysis in this research is not limited solely to the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102, but also includes: (1) the exegetes' intellectual biographies, (2) the prefaces and introductory sections of the tafsir works, and (3) relevant passages across the volumes that reflect the exegetes' perspectives on mystical practices. However, the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102 serves as the primary analytical focus, as it explicitly addresses the concept of magic (*sibir*). The research focuses on three main variables: (1) the intellectual biographies of the exegetes (*mufassir*), (2) the profiles and writing systems of their respective works "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" by Muhammad Romli and "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" by Moh. E. Hasim and (3) their perspectives on mystical practices as reflected in their interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102.

The primary instrument for data collection is documentation, supported by in-depth textual analysis of primary sources. Data sources are divided into two categories. Primary data are obtained

directly from the two tafsir works, including the exegetes' biographies, prefaces, and relevant interpretative sections, particularly those related to mystical practices. Secondary data are derived from scholarly books, journal articles, theses, and other academic works discussing Qur'anic exegesis and mystical practices.

Data collection techniques involve both direct and indirect quotation methods, utilizing printed library collections as well as digital resources (*maktabah digital*). The data analysis employs a descriptive-analytical and comparative method. The analysis is conducted through systematic organization, classification, and interpretation of data using the following comparative categories: 1) Sources of Exegesis examining whether the interpretation relies on classical tafsir, hadith, or contextual reasoning; 2) Concept of Magic (*Sihir*) analyzing how each exegete defines and conceptualizes mystical practices; 3) Position toward Local Culture identifying how local Sundanese cultural practices are accepted, criticized, or reinterpreted; 4) Language Style examining the linguistic characteristics, whether normative, didactic, or narrative; 5) *Da'wah* Orientation analyzing whether the interpretation emphasizes purification (*tajdid*) or cultural internalization. Through this comparative framework, the study aims to identify both the distinctive characteristics and the points of convergence between the two tafsir works in addressing mystical practices

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intellectual Background of Both Exegetes

a. Muhammad Romli (1889-1981)

Muhammad Romli was a prominent Islamic scholar (*ulama*) from Garut, West Java, born in 1889 in the Kadungora district during the Dutch colonial era. His full name was K.H. Muhammad Romli bin H. Sulaiman. He passed away at the age of 92 around 1981 and was laid to rest in Haurkuning hamlet, Hegarsari village, Kadungora, Garut. Romli had three sons and also raised one adopted child, the son of his elder sibling. His father was H. Sulaiman. Historically, detailed information regarding his family background remains scarce.

Romli began his early education at a local public school (*sekolah rakyat*) and pursued his religious studies at the Gunung Puyuh Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Sukabumi, West Java, which was led by Abdurrakhim, the father of the renowned scholar Ahmad Sanusi (Nurmawati et al., 2023). He continued his studies at several other pesantren across West Java before departing for Mecca, where he remained for eleven years to deepen his Islamic knowledge.

During the pre-independence era, Romli was actively involved in the Sarekat Islam (SI) organization. Alongside other Priangan ulama such as K.H. Yusuf Tojiri, he was also known as an active member of the MASC organization, a reformist group that was notably aggressive and steadfast in promoting the ideology of *al-ruju' ila al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* (returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah), much like the Persis movement. MASC was once involved in polemics with the AII ulama led by Sanusi (Rohmana, 2013)

In 1948, Romli served as the district head (Camat) of Kadungora. During the Old Order era, he was exiled to Nusakambangan Island due to his preaching activities. Although he did not formally join any specific organization as a scholar, his ideological leanings aligned closely with Islamic reformism, and he frequently associated with activists from Muhammadiyah and Persis. Romli established the Nurul Bayan Islamic boarding school at his residence.

Romli authored several works, primarily in his native Sundanese language. His publications include: *"Tafsir Nurul Bajan"* (Bandung: N.V. Perboe, 1960); *Al-Kitabul Mubin Tafsir Basa Sunda* (Bandung: Al-Ma'rifat, 1974); *Al-Hujaj al-Bayyinah fi Hukum Salat al-Jumu'ah* (Bandung: PT. Al-Ma'rifat, 1975); *Haqqu Janazah; Al-Jami' Al-Shabih Al-Mukhtasar Al-Hadith Sahih Al-Bukhari Tarjamah Basa Sunda; and Tungtunan Sholat*, 2nd edition (Bandung: Al-Ma'arif, 1982). In publishing his works, Romli was assisted by colleagues affiliated with Reformist Islamic organizations.

For the publication of *"Tafsir Nurul Bajan"*, Romli collaborated with H.N.S. Midjaja (Hj. Neneng Sastra Mijaya), popularly known as Jaksa Neneng. Neneng was a prosecutor and the owner of the printing press *"Perboe"* (an acronym for Perusahaan Bumiputera, established in 1938). He had studied religion under Tuan A. Hassan of Persis. During his imprisonment, Neneng studied the Qur'an through a Dutch translation by Sudewo. During the New Order era, he lived in the Netherlands for a time before eventually passing away in Bandung. The close relationship between Romli and Neneng was likely due to their shared reformist Islamic ideology and Neneng's role as a printing entrepreneur (Rohmana, 2017).

b. Moh. E. Hasim (1916 M–2009M)

Mohammad Emon Hasim, commonly known as Moh. E. Hasim, was born in Ciamis on August 15, 1916. Unlike Romli, he was not a traditional pesantren-based scholar (*ajengan*) but rather a foreign language teacher at secondary schools and universities. He was an autodidact in Arabic and also mastered English, Japanese, and Dutch. Hasim studied and later taught at Muhammadiyah schools, but he acquired most of his linguistic and religious knowledge through independent study.

During the national movement era, he was arrested several times by the Dutch authorities and placed under house arrest. He eventually escaped to Bandung, where he continued his career as a language teacher at various educational institutions. After retiring, he dedicated himself to self-directed study of religion and Arabic, subsequently authoring several religious books in Sundanese, including his magnum opus, the 30-volume *Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun* (1990-1993) (Rosidi, 2009). It was for this work that, on April 10, 1994, he received the prestigious Rancagé Literary Award in the Sundanese language category, formally presented on January 31, 2001. This award is a distinguished honor for authors writing in local languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, Balinese, Lampungese, and Batak. Hasim was recognized for his significant contribution to the preservation and enrichment of the Sundanese language through his literary works, particularly *Lenyepaneun* (Rohmana, 2020).

He passed away in 2009 and was buried at the Sirnaraga Cemetery, not far from his home on Jl. Mahmud 5, Pasirkaliki, Bandung. In addition to his tafsir, Hasim authored numerous other works, including: *Grammar and Exercise Elementary Grade*; *Kamus Istilah Islam* (Dictionary of Islamic Terms); *Rupa-rupa Upacara Adat Sunda Jaman Ayeuna* (Various Contemporary Sundanese Traditional Ceremonies) (Bandung: Pustaka, 1996); *Hadis Penting Papadang Ati* (Important Hadith: Illuminating the Heart) (Bandung: Pustaka, 1997); *Hadis Penting Pelita Hati* (Important Hadith: The Lamp of the Heart); *Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun 30 volumes* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1984); *Ayat Suci dalam Renungan* (Holy Verses in Contemplation)

30 volumes (Bandung: Pustaka, 1998); *Iqra* (Reading and Writing); and *Khatbah Shalat Juma'ah* (Friday Sermon) (Bandung: Pustaka, 2006) (Rohmana, 2013).

Characteristics of the Two Commentaries: Tafsir Nurul Bajan and Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun

a. Tafsir Nurul Bajan by Muhammad Romli

"*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" was written using old spelling conventions and extends only to the third juz (Q.S. Ali 'Imran [3]: 91). Romli drew upon numerous sources, including prominent Arabic tafsir works such as *Al-Manar*, *Al-Maraghi*, *Fath al-Qadir*, *Al-Baidawi*, *Madarik al-Tanzil*, *Lubab al-Ta'wil*, *Al-Tabari*, and others. He also consulted several English and Dutch-language sources. Only two Indonesian-language sources were utilized: *Tafsir Al-Qur'anul Karim* by H.A. Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas, and Abdurrohman Haitami, and *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* by Mahmud Yunus. According to Romli, one of the primary motivations for writing this work was the absence of a complete Sundanese tafsir at the time (Romli & Midjaja, 1966). However, for reasons that remain unclear, Romli himself did not complete the commentary beyond the third juz.

In terms of interpretive approach, Romli was significantly influenced by Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and his disciples, particularly Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and Mustafa al-Maraghi (1881-1945), reflecting the broader pattern among modernist Islamic writers in Indonesia. This influence is evident throughout *Nurul Bajan*, not only in the citation of their opinions but also in the adoption of their methodology: tafsir *bi al-ra'y* (interpretation based on reasoned opinion) using *the tablili* method (verse-by-verse analysis following the Qur'anic order), with the *adab al-ijtima'i* (socio-literary) style. According to al-Farmawi, the *adab al-ijtima'i* style involves meticulous explanation of the Qur'an using eloquent language while connecting the interpretation to contemporary social conditions. Manna' al-Qattan further characterizes this style by its frequent use of narratives from early Muslim scholars (*salaf*), explanations of divine laws (*sunnatullah*) manifesting in social reality, and its aim to provide solutions to societal problems through Qur'anic guidance (Aisyah, 2023).

The presentation format of *Nurul Bajan* begins with the Arabic text of the verse, followed by a word-by-word translation, Latin transliteration, a complete translation of the verse, and finally, a detailed interpretive explanation. The commentary generally includes the overall meaning of the verse, explanations of specific issues related to the verse, occasional references to authentic hadith, and opinions from both classical and modern Sunni exegetes, along with discussions of points deemed important. On average, each verse is explained over two to three pages. This presentation model differs considerably from Romli's later works, such as *Al-Kitabul Mubin*.

This study selects Romli's interpretation for several reasons. His work represents a significant Sundanese-language Qur'anic commentary by a modernist figure actively engaged with or connected to modernist movements. His interpretations provide extensive explanations of Qur'anic meanings connected to the social realities of his time. Written during the New Order era (1966-1998), his commentary emphasizes contextual explanation, reflecting the socio-religious dynamics experienced by the author. Both works gained considerable circulation in the Sundanese region, coinciding with the post-independence increase in Sundanese-language religious book publications and the decline of non-religious

Sundanese literature. Romli's work is considered a pioneering printed tafsir in the non-lithographic genre of the 1960s, reprinted at least three times (Rohayati, 2019).

b. Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun by Moh. E. Hasim

"*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" can be regarded as the first original, complete, and published Sundanese-language Qur'anic commentary using Roman script. It emerged from the tradition of a modern writer without a traditional pesantren background. The commentary is complete, covering the entire Qur'an in 30 volumes. As will be explained, Hasim connected his explanations to events he personally experienced or news he heard, making his interpretations highly relevant to his contemporary context. Methodologically, Lenyepaneun employs the *tablili* (analytical) method. Similar to Romli, Hasim's interpretive approach utilizes tafsir bi al-ra'y with the *tablili* method and the *adab al-ijtima'i* style. The organizational structure of this tafsir does not differ significantly from other Sundanese commentaries. Hasim presents the verse or group of verses to be interpreted, provides a word-by-word translation, and then offers a detailed explanation verse by verse or phrase by phrase. In his interpretations, Hasim generally employs explanations from other verses, adds the occasion of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), and incorporates hadith connected to contemporary events he witnessed or experienced. Although he did not explicitly cite sources from previous tafsir works, it is known that Hasim used Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* as one of his references, along with several Sundanese, Arabic, and English dictionaries. He also occasionally included scientific explanations, such as astronomical references (Rohmana, 2020)

Hasim began compiling "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" in 1990 while working as a language teacher, aiming to explore the meanings of the Qur'an as the primary source of Islamic teachings. He expressed dissatisfaction with existing Qur'anic translations and commentaries available in the market, stating: "Neither their methodology nor their vocabulary enriches the reasoning of advanced-level students (*santri*). Consequently, he attempted to author a Qur'anic commentary as a keepsake commemorating his 70th year. As a literary work, this tafsir emerged from the relationship between its author and his cultural background within the context of interpreting Qur'anic verses. Therefore, the interpreter cannot separate himself from Sundanese culture and tradition when interpreting verses. This is evident, for instance, in the richness of the Sundanese language he employed while interpreting verses, serving as both a cultural symbol and a reflection of his worldview (Moriyama, 2013).

The straightforward Sundanese he used is easily understood by ordinary Sundanese readers, although at the end he also provided explanations for certain words considered difficult or rarely used. According to Hasim, the compilation of Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun was motivated by several factors: his desire to preserve the Sundanese language, encouragement to study religion directly from its primary sources, the obligation to convey religious knowledge, and his dissatisfaction with existing commentaries regarding both their methodology and language. He often contemplated the relevance of Qur'anic verses to the contemporary conditions of his time. Once he discovered such relevance, he expressed it in language that captured the spirit of the verse, allowing it to penetrate the depths of the heart. "It is the spirit of the sentence that must be understood and held firmly, considering that the structure of Arabic differs from other languages," he explained (Rohmana, 2013).

General Theory of Mystical Practices in Sundanese Society

Mystical practices within Sundanese society represent a socio-cultural phenomenon inseparable from the traditional belief systems that have developed historically. Beliefs in supernatural forces, magic, ancestral spirits, and non-physical entities shape the religious behavior patterns of the Sundanese people, manifested through various rituals and spiritual practices. Conceptually, these mystical practices can be understood through the lens of symbolic theory in the anthropology of religion. Clifford Geertz conceptualizes religion as a system of symbols that provides meaning and direction to human life. In Sundanese society, mystical symbols such as amulets (*jimat*), magic (*sibir*), magical inscriptions (*rajab*), incantations (*mantra*), and offerings (*sesaji*) function as symbolic media believed to possess specific spiritual power. These symbols do not exist independently but are embedded within cosmological narratives transmitted across generations through oral traditions and customary practices (Geertz, 1973). Thus, mystical practices serve as a means of internalizing collective values and beliefs.

Beyond the symbolic approach, functionalist theory offers an explanation regarding the role of mystical practices in maintaining social stability. Within Sundanese society, mystical practices are frequently performed during times of crisis, such as illness, business failure, social conflict, or the threat of natural disasters. These rituals function to reduce psychological anxiety while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion through community involvement. From the perspective of Sundanese cosmology, mystical practices are closely connected to a worldview emphasizing the principle of balance. The concepts of *silih asih* (mutual love), *silih asab* (mutual sharpening of the intellect), and *silih asub* (mutual care) reflect social and spiritual ethics that promote harmonious relationships among individuals and between humans and nature. Sundanese cosmology perceives the universe as a living and sacred space, requiring human actions to align with the cosmic order (Rosidi, 2009). The mystical practices of the Sundanese community include, among others:

a. Seren Taun

Seren Taun is a traditional ceremony of the Sundanese community that functions as a ritual of gratitude for the harvest and simultaneously as a symbol of entrusting rice to supernatural forces believed to maintain the balance of nature (Ferescky & Safitri, 2024). This tradition represents the cosmological worldview of the Sundanese people, which views the relationship between humans, nature, and supernatural forces as an inseparable unity. The mystical elements in Seren Taun are reflected through traditional prayers, the sacred symbol of rice (Nyi Pohaci Sanghyang Asri), and the performance of rituals led by traditional elders (Subiantoro, 2017). Seren Taun continues to be practiced by Sundanese indigenous communities such as the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in Sukabumi and the Cigugur indigenous community in Kuningan Regency as a form of preserving ancestral spiritual and cultural values (Alfan et al., 2024b).



Figure 1. Cultural Documentation of Seren Taun Cigugur
(Source: ANTARA FOTO/Dedhez Anggara/foc.)

b. Jimat dan Rajah

The use of amulets (*jimat*) and magical inscriptions (*rajab*) in Sundanese society represents a mystical practice believed to function as a means of self-protection, safety, and inner strengthening. *Rajah* typically consists of specific writings or symbols containing prayers and incantations, while *jimat* takes the form of objects believed to possess supernatural power. This practice reflects the belief that material objects can serve as intermediaries for supernatural forces in human life (Saefullah, 2023). In the context of Sundanese culture, *rajab* and *jimat* are not used solely for magical purposes but also carry symbolic and spiritual meanings connected to ancestral traditions (Nabila & Noviana, 2025).

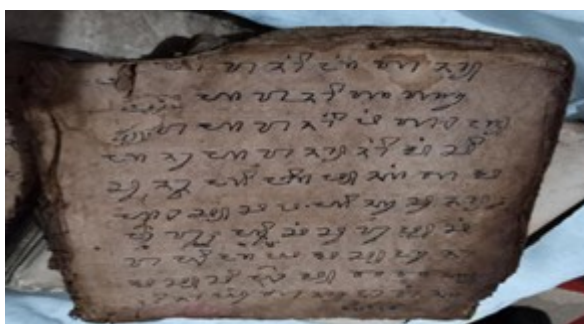


Figure 2. "Sundanese Rajah" documentary film
(Source: Dok.Deudeuh Art)

c. Sihir (Santet or Teluh)

Magic in Sundanese society is known by the terms *santet* or *teluh*, referring to mystical practices believed to influence a person's physical or psychological condition through the assistance of supernatural forces (Kusairi et al., 2025). The belief in magic reflects a worldview in which non-physical forces can directly interact with human life. Anthropologically, this practice constitutes part of traditional belief systems. However, from an Islamic perspective, magical practices are viewed as prohibited acts, as explained in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 102. Consequently, magical practices are often positioned as cultural phenomena that contradict normative Islamic teachings.



Figure 3. Illustrations of Mystical Culture in West Jawa
(Source: TribunMedan)

d. Tolak Bala Ritual

The Tolak Bala ritual is a spiritual practice aimed at protecting the community from misfortune, illness, or supernatural disturbances. In Sundanese society, this ritual is typically performed through communal meals (*selamatan*), collective prayers, or specific traditional ceremonies. Belief in the Tolak Bala ritual is based on the view that misfortune can occur due to an imbalance in the relationship between humans, nature, and supernatural forces. With the development of Islam, the Tolak Bala ritual underwent a process of Islamization by replacing offering elements (*sesajen*) with Islamic prayers, without eliminating its spiritual meaning (Sarina, 2023).



Figure 4. Residents of Puncaksari Village, Sindangkerta, West Bandung Regency, West Java, are performing the Muka Tutungkusan Tumpeng ritual to ward off evil spirits.
(Source: HarapanRakyat.com)

e. Belief in Supernatural Forces

Belief in the existence of supernatural forces constitutes the main foundation of Sundanese cosmology. The world is understood not only to consist of visible reality but also of an unseen reality that influences human life. This belief underlies various mystical practices such as the use of amulets, traditional rituals, and ascetic practices (*tapa brata*) (Deha et al., 2025).



Figure 5. Illustrations of Sundanese Culture
(Source: Labuhanbatu.com)

f. Ruwatan

Ruwatan is a ritual of self-purification from misfortune or bad luck believed to be attached to a person. In Sundanese society, ruwatan is understood as an effort to restore spiritual balance between humans, nature, and supernatural forces, such as the *ruwatan bumi* (earth purification) or *bajat bumi* (earth ceremony) (Darwis, 2018). This practice demonstrates that life's problems are understood not only rationally but also spiritually (Kusmayati et al., 2025).



Figure 6. Documentation of Sundanese Ruwatan Bumi (Earth Purification Ritual) Culture
(Source: Retizen.republika.co.id)

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, the mystical practices of the Sundanese people can also be viewed as a form of cultural adaptation to social and religious change. The arrival of Islam in the Sundanese region did not automatically eliminate local mystical practices; rather, it gave rise to a process of acculturation and reinterpretation. Some practices underwent transformation by incorporating elements of prayer, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), or Islamic symbols, while the essence of the rituals was preserved. This process demonstrates a negotiation between normative religious teachings and local traditions that have become deeply rooted in the social structure of the community (Hasan & Supendi, 2023).

Thus, the general theory of mystical practices in Sundanese society reveals that mysticism constitutes a socio-cultural phenomenon shaped by symbolic systems, social functions, and the cosmological worldview of the community. Although these practices serve adaptive functions within their cultural context, from an Islamic perspective, mystical practices require critical examination due to their potential to contradict the principle of monotheism (*tauhid*). Therefore, these mystical practices are not intended to be justified but rather analyzed objectively as cultural phenomena that necessitate filtering and reinterpretation based on the values of Islamic teachings.

The Views of Tafsir Nurul Bajan and Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun on the Mystical Practices of Sundanese Society

In the study of local Sundanese-language Qur'anic exegesis, *Nurul Bajan* by Muhammad Romli and *Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun* by Moh. E. Hasim represent two significant tafsir works. Both attempt to articulate the teachings of the Qur'an within the framework of Sundanese culture, including in responding to the phenomenon of mystical practices prevalent in the local community. These two tafsir works emerged within the context of modernist Islamic da'wah, seeking to bridge the Qur'anic text and the religious reality of Sundanese society. Both exegetes understood that mystical practices such as superstition, khurafat (irrational beliefs), *tolak bala* (rituals to ward off misfortune), or beliefs in the unseen continue to exist in various forms among the Sundanese people. In an article by Afief Abdul Lathief, it is explained that these Sundanese-language tafsirs play an active role in criticizing forms of practice considered bid'ah (innovation) or deviant, including mystical practices not rooted in Qur'anic teachings (Abdul Lathief, 2011).

In "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*", the interpretive method employed by Muhammad Romli tends to emphasize the purification of Islamic understanding through easily comprehensible Sundanese language. This tafsir interprets Qur'anic verses with an emphasis on social reality and the urgency of reforming religious practices to be accurately aligned with the principle of monotheism (*tauhid*). Within this framework, mystical practices leading to beliefs in entities other than Allah are viewed as forms of deviation requiring critical examination and correction through proper understanding of the verses.

As for Romli's interpretation regarding the mystical practice of magic (*sibir*) in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102 :

"Dina ieu ajat Kg. Nabi çaw. ku G. N. M. Uninga diwartosan kaajaan djaman Kg. N. Sulaeman as: eta elmu sibir, djimat, sulap sst, teh di-sérat (disebarkeun) ku setan, anu ku bangsa Jabudi didamél-damél do-ngengina, ditudingkeun kana kagagahanana Kg. N. Sulaeman as. dugi ka sakitu mashurna, margi ku ngagunakeun sibir kitu tjénah. Padahal Kg. N. Sulaeman as, samasakali benteu kufur. Kaagungan sareng kagagahan andjeunna sst. dina lébét njépéng karadjaanana, estu wungkul paparin saréng pangérsa G. N. M. Kawasa. Nu kalapir mah setan, (tukang sibir, djimat, sulap sst.), nu nga-djarkeun sareng njébarkeun elmu nu diilhamkeun ka dua djalmi nu ara-gung, sarae (t. énut no. 57) di Babilon, njaeta Harut sareng Marut. Lébah dicu dina tafsir Ibnu Kacir sns, aja katerangan, jen hartos má dina wa ma unzila 'alal-malakaini, tiasa dima'naan alladi anu, sa-rông lam benteu. Djadi hartosna tiasa oge: djeung benteu diturun-keun (diilhamkeun) ka dua djéléma harade" Danwuban G. Alloh swt.: Wa má ju'allimáni min abadin hattá jaqúlá innamá nabnu fitnatun falá takjur djeung nu duaan benteu ngadjar-keun ka salahsaurang oge, tapi maranehna sok nganasebatan beula, jen ulah dialadjar sibir, sabab dialadjar sibir teh tangtu mawa kana kupur ka G. Alloh swt Saur dina tafsir Ibnu Kacir, ieu timbalan teh ku sapalih Ulama dianggo dalil, nétépkeun kapirna djalmi nu diadjar sibir, sarta sarta .istidtal-na, (ngalap da.lilna) disaksian ku H. Q. tt. al-Bazzar, Tobroni, saréng Halim nu katampi ti Ibnu Mas'ud ra"

مَنْ أَتَى كَاهِنًا أَوْ عَرَّافًا فَصَدَّقَهُ بِمَا يَقُولُ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"Saba2 nu ngadatangan dukun atawa tukang sibir; seug manebna ngabenerkeun (per tjaja) kana naon anu diomongkeun (dipapatabkeun) ku eta dukun at. tukang sibir, saenjana manebna (ku kitirna) geus kupur kana naon2 anu diwahjukeun ka N. Muhammad çaw"

In this verse, the story of Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) is conveyed by God Almighty, reporting that knowledge during the time of Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) such as magic, amulets, occult sciences, etc., were written (spread) by devils, which was done by

the Jews for amusement, referring to the greatness of Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) until it became very famous, because by using such magic, it became apparent. Yet, Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) in his time never disavowed it. His greatness and magnificence were by the will of God Almighty. Those devils were the ones (sorcerers, amulet makers, magicians, etc.) who taught and spread knowledge inspired by two great figures in Babylon (according to note 57), namely Harut and Marut. The interpretation of Ibn Kathir and others does not explain that it means angels descended, but it can be understood as one or the other. Thus, it can also mean: “and it was not revealed (inspired) to the two persons.” The statement of Allah SWT: “Wa ma yu'allimani min ahadin hatta yaqula innama nahnu fitnatun fala takfur” and they did not teach anyone without first advising, so that they would not learn magic, because learning magic would certainly lead to disbelief in Allah SWT. According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation, this statement is used by some scholars as evidence to determine who were the people taught magic, and this evidence (istidlal) is witnessed by Al-Bazzar, Al-Tahawi, and Halim receiving from Ibn Mas'ud” (Romli & Midjaja, 1966).

Romli also emphasized the prohibition of using magic or other mystical practices at the conclusion of his interpretation:

“Islam ngalarang urusan-urusan kitu teh, margi pohara ngareksakna kana kaajaan hirup kumbuh. Margi talungan nu daroraka ngadjalankeun dosa-dosa nu arageurg, sapertos djinah, maling, sst. Arandjeunna ngaraos midamel dosa. Nanging tukang sibir!? Komo djaman ajeuna, sanes bae beneu ngaraos midamel kedorakaan, sawangsulna ngaraos djadi djalmi pintar, djadi alim, nu dipaparinan ilham, kanggo meresan djalmi sareng alamna. Nja kitu deui nu ngaraos barutub ku tukang-tukang sibir, djimat, dukun², njarangkana, maranebna teh djadi djalmi nu meunang kurnia Pangeranna, kenging rasial² gaib. Kitu saur Sech Mustofa al. Hamami. Andjeunna nerangkeun perkawis sibir ssb. teu kinten pandjang-lebarna. Oge para ulama mufassirin sami pada nafsiran ieu ayat kalajan paos. Mung sakieu oge manawi tjekap, sakadar kanggo nguninga, jen sibir, djimat², est. dina Islam dilarang, sanaos di golongan kaom Muslimin seueur nu nganggo, nu perjanten, nu nu ngabadja ngadamel pausahaan oge. Hal ieu benteu matak ngarobih at. ngirangan kana dilarangna ku Sara,. Kantun kumaha nu nampina bae” (Romli & Midjaja, 1966).

Islam prohibits such things because it greatly protects the sanctity of life. Because evil people commit serious sins, such as adultery, theft, etc. They feel guilty for committing sins. But sorcerers!? Even in the present era, they not only feel no guilt for committing sins, but they feel intelligent, wise, and inspired to influence humans and nature. Similarly, those who feel blessed by sorcerers, amulets, and magical arts become people who believe they have received the grace of their Lord through the secrets of occult knowledge. This is what Shaykh Mustafa al-Hamami stated. He explained magic, etc., in detail. The exegetes also interpret this verse as a condemnation. For information, magic, amulets, etc., are prohibited in Islam, even though many Muslims use them, some have married, and some even try to start businesses. This does not change or diminish the Sharia prohibition, but rather how the prohibition is received.

The conclusion is that this interpretation emphasizes aspects of faith (*aqidah*) and morality. It underscores that magic is a reprehensible act contrary to Islamic values. However, this interpretation also reflects a cultural approach to the local context, including how society understands mystical practices in daily life. Meanwhile, “*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*” by Moh. E. Hasim employs a Sundanese linguistic and literary approach to bridge the meaning of the verses, making them more resonant with Sundanese readers. This interpretation presents cultural

analogies and everyday stories while maintaining criticism of social practices considered contrary to the principle of monotheism (*taubid*). This is noteworthy because Hasim's tafsir not only translates the text but also responds to community customs closely associated with mystical elements (Chodijah et al., 2023).

As for his interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102: “*Tina dawuhan ieu urang bisa narik dua kasimpulan nya eta 1. Nabi, saperti Nabi Sulaeman, lain tukang sibir. Kamampuhan di luar hukum adat jeung hukum akal nu dipaparinkeun ka para-Nabi ngaranna mu jiz'at. Ieu teh ilmu Allah nu dipaparinkeun ku Mantenna ka para-Nabi. 2. Tukang ngajarkeun sibir ka manusa nya eta setan. Ari setan teh golongan mahluk kafir, aya setan ti golongan mahluk halus nya eta jin, jeung aya nu bungkenulnukan nya eta dhabirna mah jelema tapi ahlakna setan. Boh jin boh manusa lamun ngajarkeun ilmu sibir kaasup ka golongan kafirin, sanajan nu dijadikeun sibirna tina ayat-Al-Baqarah ayat 18 sok dipake nyirep, ayat al-Qur'an saperti surat sababaraha ayat tina surat Yusuf sok dipake melet, jeung sababaraha ayat tina surat Al-Kahfi, sanggeus dipuasaan 3 poe nu dina panutupna matigeni, pikeun napak bancang, nu disambatna Nabi Hidir bari nenjrag bumi. Jaman babeula Malaikat Harut jeung Marut turun ka nagri Babilon, nyarios ka manusa yen ayat-ayat nu diaoskeun ku aranjeunna teh fitnah pikeun nguji iman. Duanana omat-omatan ulah ngaguna-keun ayat-ayat eta pikeun nyibir malar henteu jadi jalma kafir. Tapi jalma-jalma di nagri eta teu nolih kana pibahayaean nu kacida gedena, maranehna maksa ngapalkeun ayat nu dibaca ku Malaikat nu duaan pikeun megatkeun jodo jalma nu keur laki-rabi*”.

From this statement, we can draw two conclusions: a) The Prophets, such as Prophet Solomon, were not sorcerers. The abilities beyond customary law and the laws of reason granted to the Prophets are called miracles (*mukjizat*). This is knowledge from Allah that He bestows upon the Prophets; b) Those who teach magic to humanity are devils. Devils are a group of disbelievers; there are devils from the realm of invisible beings called jinn, and there are also evil ones who outwardly appear human but possess the character of devils. Both jinn and humans, when teaching magic, are included in the group of disbelievers, although magic in the verses of Al-Baqarah verse 18 is often used for spells, some verses of the Qur'an such as several verses from Surah Yusuf are often used for spells, and some verses from Surah Al-Kahf, after fasting for 3 days ending with death, to walk swiftly, as invoked by Prophet Khidr when he walked the earth. In the past, the Angels Harut and Marut descended to the land of Babylon, telling the people that the verses they recited were a test to examine faith. Both warned against using those verses to perform magic or become disbelievers. But the inhabitants of that land did not turn away from this great danger; they forced themselves to memorize the verses recited by the two Angels to destroy the marriages of married people.

At the beginning of his interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 102, he explains the origins of magic. Then, at the conclusion, he emphasizes that those who practice magic only attain temporary pleasure.

Dawuhan Mantenna dina surat Al-Hadid ayat 20 juz' 27 kieu unggelna:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ.

“Jeung kabirupan dunya teh taya lian inwal ti Kasenangan pupulasan tanpa berekah moal ngadatangeun rasa yeungyang. Contona kieu: A jeung B caricing di bui, resmi make tengtrem ayem, malah sabalikna bakal nimbulkeun bareudang ba-widi/SK ti nu wajib, tapi beda statusna. Duanana dibere dahar jeung dikaluarkeun da manebna cicingna di dinya teh kalayan rido nu wajib, pakean, sarta dijaga kasalmetanana. A betabeun jeung

embung jadi karyawan. Ari B. unggal peuting gulinggasaban bae hayang buru-buru dikaluarkeun da cicingna di dinya kalayan bebendon nu wajib, lain karyawan tapi sakitan. Tab geuning sanajan sarua diurus sandang mah teu aya berekahna, boloampar betah malah kasiksa lahir bathin. panganna tur aman da dijaga beurang peuting, ari make SK bebendon. Jalma-jalma nu ngagunakeun sibir oge dianteur kabayangna kalawan bebendon, sanajan hasil maksudna moal bakal hirup ngabe-nang-ngabening. Jalma nu boga barga diri, lamun disuguhan dabar bari dibaeudan, pasti moal ngarasa ni'mat (Hasim, 2005).

And this worldly life is merely temporary pleasure happiness without blessing that brings no true joy. For example: A and B reside in prison, officially in a state of peace, but conversely, they will cause many problems for the authorities, yet their status differs. Both are given food and released from their confinement with official permission, provided clothing, and their safety is protected. A is happy and does not wish to become an employee. B, every night, only wishes to rush out of their confinement with official anger, not as an employee but as a sick person. So even though both are cared for and clothed, there is no benefit; they are comfortable yet physically and mentally tormented. Their food is provided, and they are safe and protected day and night, but if they receive an official decree, they become angry.

People who use magic are likewise driven by their desires with anger, although the outcome of their intentions will not allow them to live in peace. People with self-respect, if they are given food while being mistreated, certainly will not feel privileged. The following comparison is based on textual analysis of selected passages from both tafsir works (Table 1 below).

Table 1. Comparison of Tafsir Nurul Bajan and Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun

Aspek	Tafsir Nurul Bajan (Muhammad Romli)	Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun (Moh E. Hasim)
Definition of Magic (<i>Sibir</i>)	Magic is defined as knowledge derived from devils, including practices such as amulets, sorcery, and occultism, which may lead to disbelief (<i>kufr</i>)	Magic is understood as teachings of devils from both jinn and humans, including the misuse of Qur'anic verses for magical purposes (e.g. love spells, separation rituals), thus.
Argumentative Basis	Employs a normative approach based on Qur'anic verses, hadith, and classical tafsir authorities such as Ibn Kathir	Combines Qur'anic references with contextual explanations and illustrations drawn from social practices.
Language Style	Didactic and normative, using straightforward Sundanese language emphasizing legal and theological clarity.	Narrative and illustrative, employing analogies and everyday experiences.
Exegetical Approach	Textual and purification-oriented (purificative), focusing on strengthening monotheism (<i>tauhid</i>).	Contextual-cultural, bridging Qur'anic meaning with Sundanese socio-cultural realities.

Da'wah Orientation	Emphasizes purification (<i>tajdid</i>) and rejection of bid'ah and khurafat.	Emphasizes internalization of Qur'anic values through cultural approaches.
Primary Emphasis	Focus on theological (<i>aqidah</i>) and legal prohibition of magic	Focus on ethical and spiritual consequences of magical practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that both "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" by Muhammad Romli and "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" by Moh. E. Hasim view mystical practices as religious phenomena requiring critical examination grounded in the principle of monotheism (*tauhid*), as emphasized in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102. Both commentaries agree that magical practices, the use of amulets and magical inscriptions (*rajab*), and beliefs in supernatural forces independent of Allah's will constitute deviations of faith that cannot be justified within Islamic teachings. However, the divergence in their interpretive approaches emerges as a significant finding of this study. "*Tafsir Nurul Bajan*" represents a normative-dogmatic style of interpretation, strongly emphasizing the purification of faith and explicitly prohibiting mystical practices. In contrast, "*Tafsir Ayat Suci Lenyepaneun*" presents a cultural-contextual approach, utilizing Sundanese language and cultural symbols as a medium for da'wah while maintaining the principle of monotheism as its foundation. This distinction demonstrates that local Sundanese Qur'anic commentaries are not homogeneous but rather dynamic and contextual in responding to the social realities of society.

This study offers a significant contribution through its comparative focus on two influential Sundanese local tafsir works and its use of Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:102 as a key verse for understanding mystical practices in society. Employing a qualitative approach with library research methods and descriptive-interpretive analysis, this research confirms that vernacular tafsir serves not only as a means of understanding the Qur'an but also as an instrument for negotiating between normative Islamic teachings and local traditions. Nevertheless, this study has limitations, as it concentrates solely on a single verse and two tafsir works, thus not fully capturing the diversity of Sundanese exegetical perspectives on mysticism. Therefore, future research could expand the scope by examining additional verses, incorporating other local tafsir works, or combining textual analysis with field research to observe the influence of these interpretations on contemporary Sundanese religious practices. Such expansion would enrich the study of local exegesis and deepen understanding of the relationship between Islam, Sundanese culture, and mystical practices within religious life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Alhamdulillah, with deepest gratitude, the authors would like to express my sincere thanks to my beloved parents and extended family for their endless prayers, love, and support throughout this journey. The Authors also profoundly grateful to my respected teachers and mentors for their guidance, knowledge, and encouragement in the process of writing this journal. My appreciation is extended to all parties who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this work. May all your kindness be rewarded abundantly.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

In the preparation of this journal article, author used AI tools such as ChatGPT solely to assist in improving the clarity, coherence, and development of language. The ideas, research design, data, analysis, and overall arguments presented in this paper are entirely my own responsibility. AI was utilized only as a supportive tool for language refinement and structuring, not for generating the core content of the study. All data included in this journal are authentic and were collected and analyzed by me in accordance with academic standards. Therefore, author fully take responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of this work.

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